THE LAST DAYS OF THE SOVIET

On the surface, nothing had changed in St. Petersburg. The lock-outs continued, the need among the workers was increasing, the newspapers paid little attention to the Soviet. But there was a vague anticipation in the air of something big about to happen.

Perhaps this anticipation came from the strike of the post and telegraph employees. Because of the interruption in communications, wild rumors spread in the city, and a panic developed on the stock exchange. The collapse of the stock market was headlined in the newspapers and everybody began to talk of the imminent collapse of the ruble.

This crisis gave the revolutionary parties a new idea. The St. Petersburg Soviet issued an appeal to the workers and other poorer classes to withdraw their money from public savings institutions and to ask for specie, preferably gold, in payment of wages and salaries. This effort to foment panic was wholly unrealistic. Workers had practically no deposits in banks, and how could they get their wages in gold from a factory cashier when he had only his usual assortment of notes and small coins to put into the pay envelopes? If they refused to take their wages in notes, on what would they live? The appeal proved a complete fiasco.

The post and telegaph employees were losing their battle, but encouraging news began to come from other quarters. Revolts had broken out in the Far Eastern army. Unrest was reported among troops in Kiev, Kharkov, and a half-dozen other places. Was this a new revolutionary tide?

This time, however, the government was prepared to meet the emergency. On November 26 the shock troops of General Trepov surrounded the headquarters of the St. Petersburg Soviet and seized its president, Khrustalev. The government did not arrest other members of the Soviet and its Executive Board, leaving the next move up to them.

This was a deliberate provocation and the Soviet fell into the trap. It met the same evening and resolved: "The Tsarist government has captured the President of the Soviet of the Workers. The Soviet has elected a new President and will continue its preparations for armed revolt." These were empty words. The Soviet could not *continue* "its preparations for armed revolt" because it had never *started* such preparations except to arm the workers' commandos with daggers, poles, and bludgeons as a defense against a pogrom in St. Petersburg.